

Marathon County Department of Social Services
Grievance Policy and Procedures

Marathon County Social Services is committed to the provision of high quality services which insure that the rights of the customer are protected. Persons served and/or their representatives need to be involved in the planning and review of their service program.

In order to insure that the customer's rights are protected while services are provided which are consistent with the mission of the Department, the agency has established this grievance resolution system. Information concerning customer's rights and this process shall be made known to staff and customers in a timely, consistent, and diligent manner. All staff orientation plans shall provide for training in customer's rights and the grievance resolution process

I. Definition

The definition of a complaint under this policy is liberally construed to include a concern for any action of the department for which the department has decision making authority, discretion and or interpretive responsibility.

II. Applicability

The department's grievance policy and procedures apply to recipients and providers of service as well as persons making application for certifications or licenses subject to the approval of the department. Where at all possible an informal process will be utilized to resolve the grievance. A complainant may begin the Definition complaint process at any level in the informal or formal processes as described below.

In the case of Civil Rights, both staff and customer complaints are filed with the Deputy Director. .

Any limitations on an individual's appeal rights set by state policy or by law apply to grievances made under this policy when appealed at those levels.

Under Service Section programs, an appeal of a denial of service must be made in 90 days and an appeal of an adverse action within ten (10) days.

III. Right to File Complaints

- A. A complainant or person acting on behalf of a complainant may file a complaint with management staff, direct service staff or a provider under contract with the department without reprisal and may communicate with any public official or any other person without reprisal.
- B. No person may intentionally retaliate or discriminate against any complainant, person acting on behalf of a complainant or employee for contacting or providing information to any official or to an employee of any state protection and advocacy agency, or for initiating, participating in or testifying in a complaint procedure or in any action for any remedy authorized by law.
- C. No person may deprive a complainant of the ability to seek redress for alleged violation of his or her rights by unreasonably precluding the complainant from using this complaint procedure or for communicating with a court, government official, complaint investigator or staff member of a protection and advocacy agency or with legal counsel.

IV. Agency Designee for the Receipt of Complaints

The Deputy Director is designated as the recipient of Civil Rights complaints for the entire agency. The Deputy Director is responsible for the implementation of informal or formal

complaint processes under the Service Section in accordance with agency policy. Likewise, the Support Programs Manager is responsible for the Economic Support and Child Support areas. The procedures for each section or, in some cases specific service areas, are stated below.

V. Procedure by Unit of the Department

In the event that a complainant's appeal is denied at any but the final stage of the process, the complainant shall receive notice of the denial and the subsequent appeal rights.

A. Service Section

1. Child Welfare Services - Non COP/CIP

a. Informal Complaint Resolution Process

1. The unit supervisor responsible for the delivery of services is responsible for implementation of the informal complaint process.
2. The unit supervisor will contact the complainant within ten days and offer a face to face meeting to resolve the complaint or handle the matter over the phone or by mail at the complainant's discretion.
3. The unit supervisor reports back to the Deputy Director within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint the results of the complaint review and documents the outcome and the complainant's appeal procedures in writing with copies to the complainant and the Deputy Director.

b. Formal Complaint Process - Level One

1. The Deputy Director will investigate the circumstances surrounding a complaint, determine whether there appears to have been a violation of the complainant's rights and make a recommendation to the Director with regards to the findings and remedies, if any.
2. The Deputy Director will contact the complainant and offer a meeting with the Director to discuss the findings and the Director will determine whether a violation of the complainant's rights occurred and, if appropriate, order a remedy or remedies.
3. The formal complaint process will be completed within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint by the Deputy Director.
4. The Deputy Director will inform the complainant of his/her appeal processes if a mutually acceptable resolution is not reached.

c. Formal Complaint Process - Level Two

The complainant may have his/her complaint heard in accordance with Marathon County Chapter 24, Administrative Review Procedure (copy attached).